

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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Four new galleries for the display of late 17th and 18th century European decorative arts, painting, and sculpture opened at The Cleveland Museum of Art on Sunday, November 30, 1975. The galleries, located on the second floor of the Museum's original 1916 building, have been under renovation for the last ten months as part of Phase V, the final stage in the Museum's program of reinstallation of its permanent collection.

In the renovation process, gallery space has been completely rearranged, ceilings have been lowered, windows sealed off, and glass doors installed at either end to create a self-contained space where light, temperature, and humidity can be carefully controlled to preserve the works displayed.

Two of the galleries exhibit elegant furnishings produced in France from the reign of Louis XIV until the fall of the monarchy in 1789. These include Beauvais and Gobelins tapestries, upholstered chairs, clocks, candelabras, and a number of exquisitely crafted cabinets, desks, and tables inlaid with exotic woods and decorated with gilt bronze. Among the most ornate of these furnishings are an ebony cabinet and clock attributed to André-Charles Boulle. Both are veneered with tortoiseshell inlaid with brass and pewter designs, a decorative technique developed by Boulle at the court of Louis XIV.

Many works in these galleries have not been on display since 1972 when the former galleries for 18th-century French art were dismantled for rearrangement. Among these are a pair of wall hangings woven in the 18th century at the French royal looms at Savonnerie, a sofa and four chairs upholstered in Savonnerie fabric,

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2-galleries for 17th and 18th century decorative arts

and a remarkably preserved Savonnerie carpet woven around 1750 -- the latter a gift from Louis XV to King Stanislaus of Poland.

Furniture which has not been on exhibit for some time includes a pair of early 18th-century cabinet-bookcases attributed to Charles Cressent, the leading furniture-maker during the Regency of Louis XV (1715-1723), and a rare Louis XV style desk decorated with straw marquetry.

Complementing the furnishings in these galleries are portraits of the French aristocracy by Nicolas de Largillierre and Jean-Marc Nattier, still lifes by Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin and Jean-Baptiste Oudry, and paintings of mythological subjects by Francois Boucher and Jean Francois DeTroy. The elegance and gaiety of 18th-century French society is reflected in a charming small painting, The Dance in the Pavilion, attributed to Antoine Watteau.

Paintings by Jean Honoré Fragonard, Hyacinthe Rigaud, and Jacques Aved, on loan to the exhibition, The Age of Louis XV, currently on view at the Toledo Museum of Art, will be installed in these galleries when the exhibition completes its tour.

Decorative objects of exceptional quality--primarily gilt bronzes and porcelains of the 17th and 18th century--are displayed on pedestals in the rotunda of the third gallery. A superb example of the work of the French bronze sculptor Jacques Caffieri is a pair of gilt bronze firedogs or andirons with bear and boar heads, dated 1752. Another outstanding gilt bronze is a candelabrum in the form of a tree trunk embellished with birds, cupids, foliage, and rococo-style scrollwork. The candelabrum, attributed to Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain, was once owned by the King of Saxony. Also prominently displayed in this gallery is the Descent from the Cross, an exquisite ivory sculpture by the 17th-century German artist Adam Lenckhardt. The complex work, less than eighteen inches high, consists of eight figures carved from a single piece of ivory.

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3-galleries for 17th and 18th century decorative arts

Alcoves off the rotunda area are fitted with cases for the display of 18th-century porcelains, including works from Meissen and Nymphenburg in Germany, and Vincennes-Sèvres in France. Also exhibited in these cases are 17th- and 18th-century German and French silver, engraved German glass, and French faience.

The fourth gallery in the sequence houses 18th-century baroque sculpture and painting of southern Germany and Austria. The sculptures--figures of the Virgin Mary, saints, and angels--are of wood, generally painted and gilded; many originally formed part of larger decorative works in baroque churches. The sculpture collection constitutes the best group of its kind in any museum outside Germany and Austria. It includes three works by the most important Bavarian sculptor of the 18th century, Franz Ignaz Günther, as well as works by other leading German and Austrian sculptors: Ferdinand Tietz, Johann Baptist Straub, and Joseph Anton Feuchtmayer.

Paintings in this gallery include The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian, a study for an altarpiece for the convent church of Diessen in Germany by the 18th-century Venetian master Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, an oil on canvas by Franz Anton Maulbertsch, the major Viennese painter of the 18th century, whose works were commissioned mainly for churches and are rarely seen outside the regions of his activity.

Work on these galleries and earlier segments of Phase V--reinstallation of the Dutch paintings gallery and the Gothic tapestries gallery--has been made possible through the help of private donations and a grant in the amount of \$75,250 from the National Endowment for the Arts.

This first half of Phase V, in which the reinstallation of the collections of Romanesque and Medieval art still is to be done, is budgeted at approximately \$240,000. The remaining work is scheduled to be completed early in 1976.

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